

REMARKS

Applicants respectfully request reconsideration in view of the amendment and following remarks. The applicants have amended claims 28 and 30-31 as suggested by the Examiner in order to avoid the 35 U.S.C. 112, second paragraph rejection. Support for the amendment can be found in the table at page 4 of the specification.

Claims 28 and 30-31 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite for failing to particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter which applicant regards as the invention. Claims 14 and 18-20 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(e) as being anticipated by Mason et al. U.S. Patent No. 6,197,233 (“Mason”). Claims 17, 23-24, 26-27 and 29 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Mason. Claims 15-16, 21-22 and 25 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Mason as applied to claims 17, 23-24, 26-27 and 29 above, and further in view of EP 0 557 533. The applicants respectfully traverse these rejections.

35 U.S.C. 112, second paragraph Rejection

Claims 28 and 30-31 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite for failing to particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter which applicant regards as the invention. The applicants have amended claims 28 and 30-31 and believe that the claims as amended are in compliance with 35 U.S.C. §112. For the above reasons, this rejection should be withdrawn.

Rejections over Mason

Claims 14 and 18-20 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(e) as being anticipated by Mason. Claims 17, 23-24, 26-27 and 29 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over

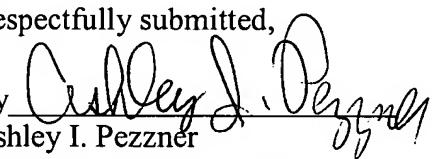
Mason. Claims 15-16, 21-22 and 25 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Mason as applied to claims 17, 23-24, 26-27 and 29 above, and further in view of EP 0 557 533.

The applicants have enclosed a Rule 1.131 Declaration which antedates Mason filing date of November 12, 1998. It is noted that the applicants have redacted the dates from the attachment to the Declaration. Therefore, Mason is not applicable prior art. For the above reasons, these rejections should be withdrawn.

In view of the above, each of the presently pending claims in this application is believed to be in immediate condition for allowance. Accordingly, the Examiner is respectfully requested to pass this application to issue.

A two month extension fee has been paid. Applicant believes no fee is due with this response. However, if a fee is due, please charge our Deposit Account No. 03-2775, under Order No. 05129-00053-US from which the undersigned is authorized to draw.

Respectfully submitted,

By 
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Enclosure: 1.131 Declaration